

HABS
MASS
7-CHICO
1-

Chicopee City Hall (Old City Hall)
Market Square
Chicopee
Hampden County
Massachusetts

HABS No. MA-201

P H O T O G R A P H S

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

NAME: HISTORIC: CHICOPEE CITY HALL
COMMON: OLD CITY HALL

LOCATION: MARKET SQUARE, CHICOPEE
HAMPDEN COUNTY, MASSACHUSETTS 01013

PRESENT OWNER: CITY OF CHICOPEE

PRESENT OCCUPANTS: MAYOR, CITY CLERK, PURCHASING AND LAW DEPARTMENTS

PRESENT USE: MUNICIPAL OFFICES (GOVERNMENT)

SIGNIFICANCE:

- A. HISTORICAL: The building's historical significance is primarily a function of the eminent figures who had occasion to visit City Hall. Famous past city residents who are likely to have participated in activities at the Hall include Charles Duryea, inventor of the first car built in America; Arthur MacArthur, father of General Douglas MacArthur; noted philosopher and author Edward Bellamy; and opera singer Mary Garden. Horace Mann, Charles Dickens, and Frederick Douglas all spoke at City Hall, and Ralph Waldo Emerson is thought to have delivered the keynote address at its dedication in 1871.
- B. ARCHITECTURAL: Chicopee's City Hall combines several historic architectural styles and is the city's most prominent 19 Century structure. The building's design is thought to be patterned after the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence and thus reflects a Romanesque Revival style of architecture - a uniqueness among other Town Halls of the period. The corbel table and high slender tower are the main points of similarity to Florence's City Hall. Some facade elements, however, represent a high Victorian Gothic architectural style. The building's main entrance, with its three arches banded with blocks of light and dark stone is reflective of this style. Elizabeth Amadon, Director of the Mass. Historical Commission, said the structure was "perhaps the most significant architectural landmark in the City of Chicopee".

PART I. Physical History

1. Date of Erection: 1871
Dedication: December 21, 1871
Sources: Xerox of Invitation to Dedication Dated 12/7/1871
Xerox of Newspaper article December 22, 1871
2. Architect: Charles Edward Parker of Boston
Reference is made to this fact in several sources including a plaque mounted on the structure itself. Parker is also credited with the design of a house, church, and a school in Chicopee,

the Easthampton Town Hall, and the Holyoke City Hall.

3. Builder, Contractor, Suppliers:

The bricks for the structure were supplied by Charles MacClellan and were made in Chicopee from the local clay beds. The bronze door knobs, hinges, and fittings and the gold eagle on top of the tower were all made in Chicopee by the Ames Manufacturing Company.

4. Original Plans and Construction:

The City Hall's narrow end faces the street and a huge round stained glass window is set in the smooth brick wall above the entrance. A 147' tower topped with a gold eagle is attached at the right side. The long sides stretch back from the facade and have narrow buttresses alternating with stained glass windows with rounded tops and circular tracery. The semi-circular granite steps led up to the main entrance with its three pointed arches in alternating blocks of light and dark stone, resting on short colonnettes. There were also several chimneys on the roof. "The companile, rose windows, exquisite portico with hand-carved calla lilly capitols on two of the pillars and Corinthian capitols on the other two have been greatly admired by European as well as American artists". (Holyoke Transcript Telegram - 7/3/42)

LOCATION OF ORIGINAL PLANS: UNKNOWN

5. Alterations and Additions:

- a) The chimneys were removed when central heating was installed and the structure was re-roofed.
- b) The semi-circular front steps have been replaced with two set of iron railed steps leading up to the main entrance from the sides.
- c) A 4 story Annex to the City Hall was constructed in 1927 and is connected directly to the rear by a two storied fully enclosed brick bridge above a service driveway.

B. HISTORICAL CONTEXT: The Chicopee City Hall was dedicated on December 21, 1871. It was originally called the Town Hall but became the City Hall when Chicopee was incorporated in 1890. The structure has always housed municipal offices. The front steps served for many years as a place for the inauguration of the first Mayors of Chicopee. Several famous figures including Horace Mann, Charles Dickens, Frederick Douglas, and Ralph Waldo Emerson have participated in City Hall events.

(For additional information see National Register of Historic Places Inventory Nomination Form).

PART II. Architectural Information

A. Description of Exterior

The Chicopee City Hall is basically a rectangular structure measuring approximately 60' by 119' with a 12' by 12' tower attached at the front right corner. The 3 story brick structure represents a masonry post and beam construction, with an even-pitched slate roof.

B. Description of Interior

The first floor consists of a vestibule with stairs to either side, and a long corridor which bisects the first floor with offices on both sides. The second floor has a lobby and an auditorium with a stage. The third floor is merely the balcony and the upper part of the auditorium.

The handsome woodwork throughout the City Hall was done in native black walnut and butternut by a local cabinetmaker. The first floor corridor is lined with marble. Recent renovations to the interior included cherry panelling in some of the first floor offices. The interior of the auditorium is distinguished by its beautiful leaded stained glass windows.

C. Site

The City Hall sits on approximately 1 acre of land and faces northwest onto Market Square - the historic center of Chicopee. It is bounded to the left by the Public Library and to the right by Front Street and the abandoned Ames Manufacturing Company Mill.

PART III. Sources of Information

A. Architectural Drawings

- Plans for City Hall Rehabilitation, Tessier Associates, Inc. Architects, February 17, 1981; Plans located in Office of Community Development, Chicopee.

B. Early Views:

- 1885 Photo in Chicopee Centennial Publication

C. Bibliography

1. Primary Sources

- a. Photos from 1950's, 1970's
- b. Invitation to Dedication Ceremonies December 7, 1871

2. Secondary Sources

- a. The Architectural Heritage of Chicopee
- b. National Register of Historic Places, Inventory Nomination Form
- c. "Chicopee's Yesterdays" Bicentennial Publication
- d. Holyoke Transcript Telegram July 3, 1942
- e. Chicopee Herald Centennial Issue May 29, 1948

- f. Chicopee Library City Hall File
 - Xerox of newspaper article dated December 22, 1871
- g. Renovation Specifications for Chicopee City Hall -
 - Tessier Associates

Supplemental Materials: ~~See attached~~

Prepared by:

Alison Page

Intern

Office of Community Development

June 8, 1981